

Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are pleased to present new drawings by Robert Morris in Berlin. The exhibition will feature twelve works from the series Blind Time (Grief) that were achieved in 2009 and are the latest manifestations of Morris' seminal Blind Time Drawings.

Robert Morris began work on the first group of Blind Time Drawings in 1973 which comprised ninety-eight sheets. The subsequent groups, up to the latest series, are less comprehensive, but even so, the ensemble constitutes one of the largest bodies of works created by an artist blindfolded.

In the first instance the titles describe the way in which the drawings were made: with closed eyes. Through the use of a mixture of graphite or powdered pigments and oil, Morris left traces of his fingers and hands on the paper. Bringing these works close to the genre of the 'task performance', each drawing was based on an assignment of tasks which were previously defined and written out at the bottom of the sheet afterwards.

The task of one of the the first drawings of the Blind Time I works (1973) reads as follows:

'With eyes closed, graphite on the hands and estimating a lapsed time of 3 minutes, both hands attempt to descend the page with identical touching motions in an effort to keep to an even vertical column of touches. Time estimation error: +8 seconds.'

A single session, a program, measurement, discrepancy, error: all these elements were decisive in the production of these works.

Dating from 1976, the Blind Time II series diverged markedly from all the others. For this sub-ensemble, Morris recruited a woman who had been blind from birth, she made the drawings under his direction. The following series Blind Time III(1985) –Blind Time VI (2000) then evinced different traces of orientation by keeping the overall same operational procedure of the first body of work.

While the works of the last series, Blind Time V (1999) and Blind Time VI (2000), relate to the artist's past and to events in his personal life, the drawings of Blind Time (Grief) articulate the artist's anger and frustration with the political establishment and the post 9/11 crusades lead by the US which represent a collective disillusioned state of mind and a sense of war weariness.

As for the work Blind Time IV (Grief) the artist defined the following situation and task:

‘Given: the page, the black, the red, the secure blindfold, the three marked off areas, the numbers, and 8 years of US military aggression in the Middle East, during which time the interventionist strategy has moved from a declared intention to establish a new world order to a global war on terror to counter-insurgency.

Working blindfolded with burnt sienna touches are made in the upper area while thinking of the uncounted civilian deaths resulting from the conflict. Then with mars black the hands attempt to count off some 3000 touches in the estimated marked off areas while thinking of the US military deaths. Before reaching this number I lose count and the mars black is depleted.’

The appearance of the works evoke a variety of associations in the given context. By using the colours ‘burnt sienna’ as well as ‘mars black’ in all of the works and the gestural landscapes Morris creates, abstract theatres of war seem to be reflected.

For their visual variety, achieved with the greatest economy of means, and for the richness of the questions they raise, the Blind Time Drawings constitute a monument in the history of art. In this tradition, the works of the Blind Time (Grief) series add a state of backpedalling to the seminal body of work by making up the balance of the campaigns on the ‘war on terror’.

Robert Morris was born 1931 and is one of the most important American artists of the post-war generation. Highly influenced by Abstract Expressionism, he developed an interest in the relationship between art, gesture and the body which resulted in groundbreaking minimal sculptures using a variety of media such as aluminium, lead, plaster and felt. In the 1960s Morris was deeply involved in the activities of the Judson Dance Theater where he participated in performances by Yvonne Rainer and Simone Forti amongst others. By inventing and trying out new modes of work, Morris has created a comprehensive, complex and highly influential oeuvre over the past five decades.

Morris’ work has been represented in numerous museum solo exhibitions including New York’s Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970; the Art Institute of Chicago in 1980; the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art in 1986 and Washington D.C.’s Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1990. In 1994 the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York organised a major retrospective of the artist’s work which traveled to the Deichtorhallen in Hamburg and the Musée National d’Art Moderne in Paris. From November 2009 until May 2010 the Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach showed the exhibition Robert Morris. Notes on Sculpture - Objects, Installations, Films. The artist’s works were shown at documenta 6 (1977) and 8 (1987) and were included in the

group exhibitions of the Venice biennial in 1978 and 1980. Morris is Professor at the New York Hunter College.

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